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**Bertrand Badie:  
Cultural Diversity Changing  
International Relations?**

ANNA LEANDER

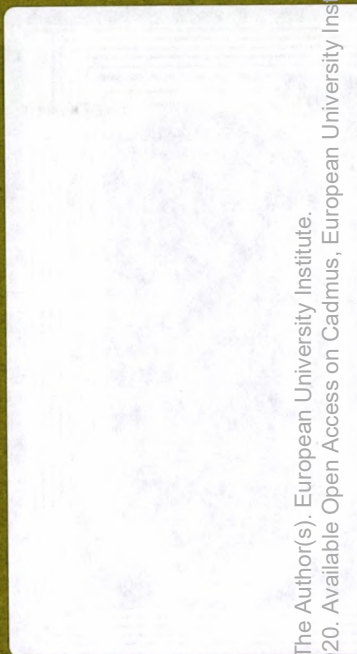
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# Bertrand Badie: Cultural Diversity Changing International Relations\* ?

ANNA LEANDER

(Contribution to Ole Weaver and Iver B. Neumann eds., *Masters in the Making. Contemporary International Relational Realitions Theorists Assessed*, London: Routledge, forthcoming)

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# Bertrand Badie: Cultural Diversity Changing International Relations ?

ANNA LEANDER

Bertrand Badie is professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, where he teaches International Relations. However, Badie's involvement in "International Relations" (IR) is recent. Most of his publications deal with state building and comparative politics where international aspects are no doubt important but not central.<sup>1</sup> Badie's recent involvement in IR is the logical outcome of his earlier work. Both his critique of theories and concepts claiming universal validity and his studies of political development inside and outside Western Europe lead to a recognition of the plurality of meanings and of the concrete problems that arise when several coexisting perceptions of the world interact, dominate and change each other. In his view, the legitimacy crisis of states outside the West is the result of a contradiction between the imported/imposed practice of the state and practices organizing political life according to another logic or rationality. The legitimacy crisis of the "imported" state in turn effects the international system. The international is therefore essential both for understanding political problems and for resolving them.<sup>2</sup> "International Relations", though of an unusual kind, take a central place in the study.

The following paper argues that IR can benefit from the work of a new-comer/outsider like Badie. Badie is concerned with one of the most central issues in the theoretical and methodological debates, namely the implications of cultural plurality for the theory and practice of IR. Rather than drawing on a philosophical and meta-theoretical discussions, he draws on comparative politics and owes more to anthropology than to philosophy, more to Geertz than to Derrida. This approach may enrich the discussion in IR and perhaps open up new fields of dialogue. This contention justifies including a scholar, evidently a novice in the field of IR proper, in this context.

Badie, who has produced both theoretical and applied work, is more than a

<sup>1</sup> There is a bibliography at the end of the text. A cursory look reveals that Badie has written only one book (co-authored) and one article dealing with IR directly. The footnotes henceforth only mention the title of the publication referred to (*titles in italics* refer to books).

<sup>2</sup> The possibility to imagine and develop alternative forms of political organization which might better be able to cope with the social and political realities of the countries.

theoretician interested in applied studies or an area specialist with some concern with theory. His method reflects a central theoretical proposition: that theories and concepts with claims to universal validity cannot be used to interpret social relations. The only way to understand political and social phenomena is to treat both history and culture seriously. The paper starts with a summary of the main theoretical claims, proceeds to discuss the treatment of one subject, the state, and finally show the relevance of Badie's work to current IR debates.

## 1. The Crisis of Universalism ?

The theoretical work of Badie is part of a scholarly trend that opposes social theories which analyse and explain social phenomena with concepts valid at all times and for all societies, claiming to know the ultimate direction of history, such as Marxism or Modernization Theory. Such theories, Badie argues, have been disproved as political science and sociology have expanded outside Western Europe.<sup>3</sup> Time has also proved the inapplicability of overly general models. Developing countries have failed to follow prescribed paths. They have neither developed into images of Western democracies nor remained in the "periphery" of the World System. Therefore, Badie argues, the social sciences are undergoing a crisis which

stems from questioning universalism, mono-determinism and the compartmentalism between political science and history. New paradigms are now conceived in order to overcome this crisis: culturalism, social action and historical sociology.<sup>4</sup>

This crisis manifests itself in what Badie calls the "three major crises of classical comparative analysis": the crisis of universalism, that of space and that of time. In this section we will first pursue the arguments behind each crisis. Second, we will consider the use Badie makes of historical sociology to introduce the elements missing in a universalist analysis, namely history and culture, in a "historical sociology of culture". Lastly, we will suggest that the development of this approach is still tentative and in many ways understandable only through Badie's applied research.

<sup>3</sup> "Formes et Transformations des Communautés Politiques", p. 599.

<sup>4</sup> "Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?," p. 340.



### The expression of a crisis

Badie calls the first crisis the “crisis of universalism”. It is the crisis of *mono-causal explanations*. A caricature of monocausal explanation that Badie often uses as example is Robert Dahl’s claim early that GNP growth determines the development of democracy. In more subtle forms the use of mono-causal explanations in academia remains widespread. A main cause is sought out and given a central position in an explanatory framework granted general validity. Badie sees this as the most common procedure in political science.

This type of explanation assumes that there is a specific logic underlying a system where-ever and when-ever that system operates. However, Badie points out the factors most relevant for explanation change with the context. Since societies do not function in a single way, no single theory, with its gamut of concepts, methods and categories can adequately explain events. A theory developed in a context different from the one under analysis may obscure more than it clarifies.

In addition, implicit in most mono-causal explanations is the uni-directional assumption if A (differentiation, economic development, strong state) then B (development of a modern state, democratization, economic development), which disregards the evidence that similar events or developments might have not only varying but opposite effects in different contexts. In most cases it is the specific combination of construction of new structures and destruction of old ones which is important, so any deep-going sociological analysis must “account for the totality of evolutive and devolutive factors”, or, in other words, account not only for what develops but also for that which disappears.<sup>5</sup>

This first crisis leads a second crisis which Badie calls “crisis of explanation”. Having posited that social science can no longer apply a universal framework, Badie explains this in terms of the plurality of rationalities, linked to the cultures within which they have evolved. On Weberian lines, Badie argues that since people’s motivations and behaviour are linked to their values, and their values, defined by culture, it is necessary to account for culture. Culture gives rise to variations in behaviour already among countries and regions in the Western world, but when we look beyond it, the significance of culture becomes even clearer. In this sense, the second crisis is a crisis of *space* provoked by the expansion of political science beyond the “West”, “pointing to the fact that political processes cannot be studied without reference to cultural

<sup>5</sup> *Sociologie de l’Etat*, p. 92.

variables.”<sup>6</sup>

Finally, in addition to the difficulties caused by spatial expansion generalizing explanations are shaken by a third crisis, which Badie refers to as “a crisis affecting the relation to history”, or in other words a crisis related to *time*. Like culture, time changes the relevance of different variables. Historical change may invalidate a universal framework. The relevant factors for understanding “state-building” in present-day developing countries are fundamentally different from those underlying the historical development of the states in Western Europe. Badie refutes the all too common teleological assumption that history is governed by “historical laws”. The “less developed” will not necessarily evolve into the “more developed”. On the contrary, respect for history entails recognizing that we have no means of knowing the future. What develops out of the present may not be a version of what already is, but something else. According to Badie there is, for instance, not one modernity towards which all countries evolve, but a plurality of modernities. Modernities in the Islamic world “defy all known models, by taking new forms which in no way repeat the history of the Western state-building.”<sup>7</sup>

To declare war on uni-causal mono-directional theories may strike one as flogging a dead horse. Systemic theories as well as reductionist and ahistorical forms of Marxism seem discredited and abandoned along with Grand Social Theory in most academic camps. Yet, in many subjects, including IR, concepts are blithely transferred from one cultural and historical context to another and theories applied to widely different realities as will be seen in greater detail below. This gives the criticism continued relevance.

### **The missing elements: history and culture**

The causes underlying the crisis Badie discerns in the social sciences clearly indicate the elements which have to be introduced to resolve it: history and culture.

History is necessary to place social groups and institutions in their proper context. Standardized categories pave the way for misleading parallels and impedes understanding. Badie argues that relations between social groups have to be looked at in context. The past of these relations, with the concomitant institutionalisation and practice indicate the possible future development. It is, however, not enough to stress that concepts must be historically contextualized,

<sup>6</sup> “Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?,” p. 343.

<sup>7</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d’Islam*, p. 219.



a method to do so must also be developed. For this purpose Badie reverts to a specific brand of historical sociology.<sup>8</sup>

First, Badie argues that authors who use a general model to explain historical events, I. Wallerstein for instance, have made a valuable contribution by defining and refining abstract concepts in order to operationalize them. However, their efforts suffer from being based on a method designed to provide confirmation of an a priori theory. Since the model defines what the historian looks for it is almost inevitable that myopia will lead him to observe the causal relations posited by the model from the outset. There is little check on other possible causal factors. Moreover, there is an inbuilt inclination to select and interpret material to make it “fit” the categories defined by the theory.

Next Badie criticizes the approach of Skocpol and others, namely one “analyzing causal regularities in history” by comparing historical phenomena: e.g. social revolutions, democracy or dictatorship, or revolutions from above. This approach aims to identify common causes and structures underlying similar events. According to Badie this implies the assumption that the phenomena studied are essentially the same independently of the underlying cultural diversity. A revolution in China is presumed to be the same as a revolution in Russia, a claim Badie challenges.<sup>9</sup>

Badie favours a third type of historical sociology where “concepts are used to develop meaningful historical interpretation.”<sup>10</sup> This approach is not direct to hypothesis testing, but uses sociological concepts to make sense of historical trajectories. Through detailed case studies it also spells out the embeddedness of the concepts used. Comparative studies are especially pertinent in this process since they bring out embeddedness more clearly than single cases. “The socio-historical identity of the modernity invented in the West,... is only fully perceptible when opposed to another political order, constructed in another context, and facing other challenges, which engenders a practice of politics of

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the approaches Badie refers to, see Theda Skocpol, “Emerging Agendas and Recurrent Strategies in Historical Sociology,” in her edited *Vision and Methodology in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1982). The classification scheme is found on p. 363.

<sup>9</sup> “Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?”, p. 350.

<sup>10</sup> This tradition include Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed. Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966); Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982); and Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).

a different nature.”<sup>11</sup> However, comparison can only play this role if cases are more than illustrations of preconceived theories. In other words, while Skocpol argues in favour of a “variable-centred” approach Badie defends a “case-centred” approach.<sup>12</sup>

According to Badie, even this modest use of historical sociology is ridden with problems which the researcher can not resolve only reduce by critical awareness.<sup>13</sup> The main problem, is that, as all historical approaches, it tends to overrate continuities and underestimate ruptures. In making sense of history, one is unwittingly led to accentuate cumulative events and conditions while underestimating the role of the arbitrary. The researcher is led back to the domain of linear causalities and falls back on evolutionary arguments. Moreover, historical presentation is inclined to produce the impression that events are unified in a “*démarche totalisante*”.<sup>14</sup> Badie follows Popper in warning about the risk inherent in summing up traits and events with possibly different causes and dynamics under a single heading and treating them as equivalent.

If introducing history appears problematic, introducing the second missing element, culture, is even more hazardous. Badie agrees with Weber that “political order is above all the outcome of conflicts between individuals and groups with diverging material interests and values”,<sup>15</sup> and is therefore obliged to account for the divergence of values. But Weber himself, in Badie’s reading, remained caught in an evolutionary vision and “*de facto* provides the criteria for a political modernization”. Weber classified all societies that do not follow the Western pattern as non-rational and traditional.<sup>16</sup> Badie underlines that such a classification is teleological, and that the binary categories rational-irrational, modern-traditional are inadequate tools for dealing with the empirical plurality of rationalities and political behaviour.

More sensitive concepts, defined in relation to the plurality of values must be developed.<sup>17</sup> Values are an essential aspect of culture, for which Badie uses

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>12</sup> The distinction is developed by Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method. Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 1987).

<sup>13</sup> The following arguments are drawn from *Culture et Politique*, pp. 97-70.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> “Formes et Transformations des Communautés Politiques”, p. 606.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 606-07.

<sup>17</sup> See below (p. 12).



Geertz's definition: culture is an "intersubjective system of meaning" which informs action.<sup>18</sup> In other words, integrating culture in the study implies

revealing the *cultural codes*, that is the integrated systems of meaning, formed in history, and filling the function of controlling the processes of social and political transformation. Accounting for these codes should then allow us to define the content and the orientations of the different social objects which specify each significant social space.<sup>19</sup>

This being said, it is difficult to define cultural code exactly and to propose how it should be revealed. The twofold tradition for treating culture in political science—as Badie sees it—has provided little to build on. The most common attitude by far is to ignore culture altogether. Authors who have incorporated "culture" have usually done so (1) in a tautological way, or (2) as a residual category for explaining phenomena which cannot be accounted for by other means. The study of culture has been left to scholars in other disciplines, notably sociology and anthropology.<sup>20</sup>

To sum up, Badie argues that to meet the need for introducing both time and space in the analysis, it is necessary to develop a historical sociology of culture. However, there is little to build on. Authors in the tradition of historical sociology offer a well developed corpus regarding the use of history in sociology, yet contribute little to the study of culture. Those who have attempted to include culture—Skocpol, Barrington Moore, and Wallerstein ignore it—have usually reduced it in different ways. Perry Anderson reduces it to the legal system and particularly to the regulation of property rights; Bendix reduces culture to legitimacy and Stein Rokkan reduces it to religious institutions.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?, for instance at p. 344.

<sup>19</sup> *Culture et Politique*, p. 73.

<sup>20</sup> It would be too complex to retrace the debate here. Stenographically, Badie draws on the semiotic approach in anthropology, and on a reading of Weber accentuating: 1. the role of structures in establishing culture; 2. the articulation of culture and other determinants of social and political action. See *Culture et Politique*, chapter I, for the anthropological heritage; chapter II, for treatment of Weber, Durkheim and Parsons, chapter III for the failure of political science to integrate culture. Also "Communauté, Individualisme et Culture," pp. 119 ff. and "Formes et Transformations des Communautés Politiques," pp. 608-21.

<sup>21</sup> *Culture et Politique*, pp. 61-67.

### Towards a historical sociology of culture

Bertrand Badie's own approach is not entirely clear cut. He is more prone to point out the "weakness" of the enterprise than to define it and specify how studies of "the historical sociology of culture" should be pursued.<sup>22</sup>

He makes the point that there is no *definition* of political culture or the elements it can be apprehended. Second, the *level of analysis*, viz. the limits of the community sharing a common political culture, is unclear. Should the limits be drawn according to nation, religion, language, tribe or clan? Third political culture is *open and shifting*. Outside influences and interventions constantly modify it, making it virtually impossible to pin down its meaning. Fourth, *the status* of political culture as an operational concept is ambiguous. It cannot be more than one variable whose relative weight will always be uncertain.<sup>23</sup> Finally, Badie deplores that there is no way of *falsifying* explanations in a historical sociology of culture.<sup>24</sup>

However, when we examine Badie's project, these "weak" points appear to result from a misconstrued attempt to evaluate the research with a set of criteria belonging to a theory based on precisely the universal assumptions Badie is rejecting. Rather than shortcomings, the points Badie makes result from his project. How could there be a general definition of culture and how to approach it, if the aim of the study is precisely to "reveal the *cultural codes*, that is the integrated systems of meaning, formed in history, and filling the function of control on the processes of social and political transformation"? How could there be a clear definition of the relevant community to study, if concepts and categories (including community) are to be defined by the political culture to be studied? Finally, how could such a project be termed in a Popperian way, allowing it to be tested?

Consider how Badie proposes to study modernity: "political modernity, in what is its identity as well as in what has favoured or troubled its transfer [to areas outside the West], must be understood as a way of thinking politics, as a manner of accommodating [*aménager*] relations of domination and hence of

<sup>22</sup> See notably, *Culture et Politique*, pp. 133 ff. and "Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?," pp. 344 ff.

<sup>23</sup> A classical statement of this point is made by Geertz in the comparison between Indonesia and Morocco and the different impact of Islamic culture in the two societies. See Geertz op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> See *Culture et Politique*, p. 67.



practising a political development, and finally as source of *mobilisation contestataire*.<sup>25</sup> Does not a project couched in terms of “thinking”, “managing relations of domination”, and “practising politics” sound like one suggested by those who refute methods which assume that a common exterior criterion can be used to test a theory?

It would seem that the major difficulty is the position on rationality and relativism, left out of the list of difficulties presented by Badie, as is the related question of how it is possible from the perspective of one culture to understand a foreign culture. How can the claims to plurality of value systems, of understandings of the self or the other, of modernities, and of rationalities coexist with the assumption of a single logic to account for them? In Badie’s work there is a continuous tension between the particular, the non-transferrable on the one hand, and the universal, the generalizable on the other. He emphasizes the need to develop universal concepts, to speak one language, and to study “Reality”, yet his studies are constructed around the claim that there are no generalizable explanations, that what has to be accounted for is the singular, that concepts change meaning in different contexts and cannot be transferred from one context to another, and that ultimately the rationalities change.<sup>26</sup> The ambiguity is well expressed in the statement:

Rediscovering cultural plurality—and relativity—is a valuable acquisition in recent critical sociology; however, to fall into the most absolute culturalism and in the most total relativism can only lead to paradox.<sup>27</sup>

Badie gives no theoretical solution to this problem which is after all not surprising. However, Badie’s studies presuppose that it is possible to communicate between cultural codes. Through a process of studying and interacting with different cultural codes it is possible to understand them. This clearly requires applied studies.

## 2. Political Culture in Practice: the State

Since the theoretical claims made by Badie are inseparable from the analysis of historical phenomena a reference to it is important both to reflect its position

<sup>25</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d’Islam*, p. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Comparative Analysis in Political Science: Requiem or Resurrection?*, p. 351.

<sup>27</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d’Islam*, p. 10.



in the work and to clarify theoretical points. This section will therefore concentrate at the applied study of “historical sociology of culture”. We have seen that Badie defines culture as an intersubjective system of meaning (Geertz’ definition). Political culture then becomes the intersubjective system of meaning underlying politics. It might further be recollected that modernity (a form of political culture) is defined,

...as a way of thinking politics, as a manner of accommodating relations of domination and hence of practising a political development, and finally as source of *mobilisation contestataire*.<sup>28</sup>

These three interwoven elements (thinking, practising, and managing change), will be taken as the components of “political culture”. We will show how these three elements of political culture are used to explain state-building in different contexts.<sup>29</sup> First, “practising politics” will be discussed mainly with regard to Europe through the work *La Sociologie de l’Etat*. The different European trajectories of state development underlines that political culture is formed by practice and cannot be deduced from any single aspect (such as religion). The second aspect of political culture, “thinking politics”, will be discussed through Badie’s comparison of state building in the West (here treated as a unity) and in the Islamic world in *Les Deux Etats*. The difference in “thinking politics” clarifies some fundamental differences in political culture. The “management change”, the last component of political culture, will be dealt with through *L’Etat Importé*. It shows that political culture is perpetuated *via* change. The generalization of the state outside Western Europe masks considerable continuity in political culture. The problems caused by “importing” state practices brought Badie to take a more active interest in IR.

### The Western state: practising politics

Badie and Pierre Birnbaum consider that the *duality* of the secular and the religious is common to Western European political thinking. The church and the princes opposed each other “precisely on the grounds of a duality of categories which all the actors accept, recognize *a priori*”.<sup>30</sup> This, according to Badie, remains the case throughout the history of Christianity, including the Absolutist

<sup>28</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d’Islam*, p. 15.

<sup>29</sup> All aspects of political culture could have been presented in any of the works. The following division is purely a matter of including Badie’s key works.

<sup>30</sup> *Culture et Politique*, p. 98.

period and the Reformation.<sup>31</sup> Since duality is shared, variations in political culture cannot be explained by religion alone. Instead political practice seems significant. For instance, the link between feudalism and the establishment of strong central state (absolutism) is confirmed by Badie and Birnbaum.<sup>32</sup> But since feudalism took different forms across Europe, the states that emerged were correspondingly diverse. The initial trajectories become self-reinforcing and survive the cultural and historical context of their origin.<sup>33</sup>

Some of Badie's arguments with regard to France and in the UK can serve as illustrations. In France, where national unification was slow and allegiance to the centre long remained weak, the state centralized for control and centralization eventually perpetuated itself (pp. 173-88). The first European army was French; from 1551 the king began to send out *fonctionnaires*, with powers overriding those of local officers; Richelieu systematically destroyed local fortifications; the revolutionary national assembly established 83 *départements* to undo regional communities; Napoleon definitely put the *administration* outside the realm of the common law; minds and education were increasingly controlled from the centre; and economic life was subjected to the control of the state through mercantilism and nationalisation. The effect of centralization and extensive intervention was the formation of a bureaucracy and the formation of what Toqueville considered to be "*une classe particulière*" of "*fonctionnaires administratifs*".

The result is a particularly original relation between the categories of rulers. To the extent that the state, as organization, has made itself independent of the ruling class and of the entire civil society, it seems to monopolize the representative function of which Parliament is consequently deprived (p. 187).

In Britain, on the contrary, the state developed through and reinforced relations of collaboration between the political centre and the periphery (pp. 196-203). Allegiance to the political centre was achieved early. The elites in Britain coexisted with the centre and the centre did not centralize to control. Instead of sending out emissaries to break up regional solidarities, it relied on

<sup>31</sup> See *Sociologie de l'Etat*, pp. 145-148, and *Culture et Politique*, pp. 117 for the point on absolutism and pp. 118-139 for a discussion of protestantism.

<sup>32</sup> The feudal order creates social class solidarities among peasants and serfs, opposed to the feudal lord. Moreover, it cuts the city and the country-side off from each other, making possible in the long run an alliance between the crown and the city.

<sup>33</sup> The following account is from *Sociologie de l'Etat*, to which the page numbers in parenthesis refer.



the services of locals. Moreover, the borders of Great-Britain are more obvious than those of the continental countries. There was no reason to develop a strong army. Rather the navy developed as much for conquering external markets as for military defense. "In Great-Britain, it is the market that dominates and not the state, whereas in France or in Prussia the state organizes the market." The outcome was a weak state with a low level of institutionalization. The civil service developed late, and was kept apart from actual political power. In Britain the civil servants constitute an "almost totally marginalized governing category." The situation is one where,

Instead of a state, it is a social class that governs Great-Britain, an establishment to which the middle classes and the local gentry are linked and which includes the aristocracy... as well as the bourgeoisie (p. 199).

In short, Badie argues that variation in historical practice in Europe has produced a range of political cultures. Consequently, in spite of a common religion, and a common way of understanding the world, the European countries have developed different forms of states and diverging political cultures. "Western political modernity derives its identity and its singularity from its relation to a historical context and shared *enjeux* (stakes), and above all from a common culture... Western political modernity ceases to be singular when it is analyzed in terms of concrete challenges represented by the construction of each of the European systems."<sup>34</sup>

### **The state in the "land of Islam": thinking politics**

The second element of political culture, thinking about politics, comes to the fore in Badie's comparison of the Islamic world and in the West. A fundamental difference between state-building in the Islamic world and in the West, is that they take place in contexts marked by fundamentally different or even opposite ways of understanding politics.<sup>35</sup> This does not presuppose an immutable "Muslim" way of thinking politics. New practices and ideas are constantly integrated and old ones transformed. However, they are combined with the preexisting political culture which persists, albeit in altered form.

<sup>34</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d'Islam*, p.13.

<sup>35</sup> This is evidently not the only difference. There are also differences in the social structures, in the impact of the international system, and in the way that these and other factors fed into a way of practising and managing politics. However, the following account concentrates on differences in the perception of politics.



According to Badie, politics in Islamic political “thought” is diametrically opposed to Western political thinking: the duality between temporal and spiritual is even more radically rejected than is commonly accepted. It is usually argued that early Islamic political thinking was tainted by “Islamic” and “Hellenistic” traditions. According to Badie this thesis misinterprets the meaning of the hellenistic imports and exaggerates the tensions they caused. In fact, Muslim political thinkers adjusted the Hellenic concepts and theories to their own frame.

It was mainly Plato’s fundamentally monist and communitarian ideas that the Arab thinkers used, as opposed to Aristotle introduced in the West by Thomas of Aquino. Moreover, the parts of Plato which would have required a revision of the Islamic position on the unity of temporal and spiritual were transformed. For instance, the Platonian concept of *nomos* (ideal), to which laws should conform to be just, was assimilated to the *shari’a*.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Fārābī justifies separating ideal and legitimate policies (revealed) from the real and imperfect (human) ones by using Plato. Even in the hellenistic version of Muslim political philosophy, Badie argues, human reason can be no more than instrumental in revealing the superiority of the divine law. The ignorant polity (not of reason but of the divine revelations—*djāhiliyya*) remains the rejectable polity. The search for the revealed truth and not for rationality, explains the effort put into education and political persuasion by the *falāsifa*, as in the work of Nāser ed-Din Tūsi.

the Islamic scholastic of the *kalām* is founded on the double proposition that reason cannot be a substitute for the revealed truth and cannot consist in anything but a method of gaining access to this truth.<sup>37</sup>

The “Hellenism” of the *falāsifa*, remained essentially Islamic, in accepting the unity of the spiritual and the temporal. The unity of the religious and the political gives fundamental political concepts a new meaning. Unlike its Western counterpart, Islamic political theory makes a sharp distinction between *power* as authority and *power* as *puissance*. Whereas the former is in the hands

<sup>36</sup> Since the *nomos* is equated with the *Shari’a*, the prevailing presentation of Ibn Rushd (Averroës) as the defender of the duality of truth is false according to Badie, *ibid*, pp. 43-55.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, p. 49. There are different interpretations of what this method entails. According to the motazilist school of the VIII<sup>th</sup> Century, the Koran should be interpreted according to the circumstances, while the hanbalites rejected such distancing as heretic.

of God, the latter is the empirically observable human power, necessary to maintain social order. The first is tied to legitimacy, the second to necessity. In this context *legitimacy* can never be constructed around human reason, but is religiously derived.

| Current                                      | Vision of Modernity   | Main Exponents   |
|--|---|--|
| Reform-ists                                  | the compatibility of Islam and Modernity, the only sign of rupture is in the acceptance of nation state defined in terms of continuity  | Rifā'a Rāfi' al-Tahtawi, Ibn Abi Diāf, Khayer-ad-Din, Husayn al-Marsafi, Mustafa Kāmil |
| Revival-ists                                 | the need to return to the sources and find the roots of an alternative modernity, and alternative political forms. Islam is accepted not only as religion but as civilization.            | Djamal-ad-Din al-Afghani, Muḥamad 'Abduh, Rashid Ridā, Ahmad Khān Bah-ādur             |
| Islamists                                    | same as revivalists, but in addition there is an the radical incompatibility between Islam and Western modernity, imputing the responsibility of failed modernity to this incompatibility | Hasan al-Bannā, 'Abd al-Kādir 'Audah, Abū al-'Alā al-Mawdūdī, Sayyid Kutb              |
| Secular (mainly socialism, <i>ba'thism</i> ) | Secular, modernity based on the nation state to be imported from the West   | Shibli Shumayyil, Farah Antūn, Michel Aflak, Salāmah Mūsa                              |

**Table 1.** Modernity Viewed by Contemporary Thinkers from the Muslim World

Political thinking in pre-dominantly muslim countries continues to reflect the unity of temporal and spiritual. First, the political debate around modernity and the effects of importing the state and political practices from the West has continuously been posed in terms of its compatibility with the Muslim religion (table 1). Second, the importance of religious movements in politics indicates continuity. They are often at the origin of the political opposition since they, more than other movements, are able to challenge the legitimacy of the regime by claiming to know "the right" interpretation of the revelation. But also because they are difficult to repress and can only be controlled at the risk of eroding legitimacy. Inversely, the limited role of non-religious radical political movements, notably Marxism, mirrors a lack of legitimacy sharpened by the role of minorities in these movements (Armenians in Egypt; Jews and Christians



in Lebanon).

Badie summarises the continuity in political thinking in his idea of *culture de l'émeute*, as opposed to the *culture citoyenne* of the West. In the Muslim world, "political dialogue" is inconceivable. Political opposition is directed against the political scene as such, whereas in the West demands for political change aim specific policies. Typically, opposition is expressed in abrupt riots. Political opposition explodes as the community (not the individual) considers the political power holder illegitimate. A decision is not reasoned because of the religious definition of legitimacy. Badie would not claim that thinking about politics alone could explain the *culture de l'émeute*. Differences in political practice are equally significant. The strong vertical solidarities (family, ethnicity, regions, etc.) in most Muslim countries weaken the role of horizontal solidarities, diminishing the potential role of trade unions and political parties in mediating and channelling political demands.

|                       | Relations with Social Groups                                      | Legitimacy                                 | Central Actor, Power Holder    | Examples  |
|-----------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Conservative          | relying on relations with traditional local leaders               | traditional, absence of foreign influences | King, Traditional Leader       | Ottoman Empire, Persia, Morocco, Gulf States                |
| Revolutionary         | rejection of traditional elites, construction of new solidarities | modernization project, nationalism         | army, bureaucracy, technocrats | Kemalist Turkey, Iran of Mossadegh, Algeria, Nasser's Egypt |
| Counter-Modernization | rejection of traditional elites, alliance with the miserable      | restoration project, religion              | religious establishment        | Post-revolutionary Iran                                     |

**Table 2.** Contemporary Political Regimes' Handling of the *Culture de l'Emeute*

Governments live with the *culture de l'émeute* by developing ways of controlling the political periphery. Because of the radicalness of political opposition, they try to contain it combining repression, neo-patrimonial and clientelistic practices. This only increases the radicalism of an opposition which



sees that negotiated political change is blocked (table 2).

In short, Islamic political thought, notably the crucial lack of separation between religious and temporal, leads to a perception of essential aspects of political life, including community, individuality, legitimacy, sovereignty or property sharing nothing of similar concepts in the West. This modifies political actors' understanding of themselves and others. Methodologically this means that to make sense of politics in the muslim work entails some form of understanding of Islamic political thought. Moreover, the political thinking prevalent in the Muslim world is one of the main factors in the creation of a political culture of riot, as opposed to the European culture of citizenship. Because of this political culture many governments in Muslim countries are trapped in vicious circles: distance from the political periphery makes rulers, weary of radical political opposition, try to control the periphery through a set of clientelistic and repressive relations. This blocks democratic change and radicalizes an opposition with a conception of legitimacy already pushing it to question the regime, which reinforces the need to control the periphery, the reliance on clientelistic relations, and perpetuates the strong vertical solidarities.

### **The "imported state": managing change**

The vicious circle identified in the states of the Islamic World has a direct bearing on the third component of political culture: the management of change. The handling of change influences not only the prevailing political culture, but also sets the stage for possible future transformations. In *The Imported State*, Badie generalizes insights and conclusions from the studies of the state in Muslim world to other non-Western who share an imported political practice, imported ideologies, imported institutional roles for political parties and for the administration.<sup>38</sup> Their legal systems are expected to resolve conflicts in a society for which they were not designed, and over which the laws usually have little or no grip.

The reality is that, interiorised as it may be by local elites, the state model does not function and merely reproduces itself formally in the societies of the third world [...] the state in Africa as in Asia remains a pure product of importation,

<sup>38</sup> Imported, refers to the "transfer to a given society, of a social, political or economic model or a practice, generated and invented in a history and social order which are fundamentally different from its own". *L'Etat Importé. Essai sur l'Occidentalisation de l'Ordre Politique*, p. 126.

a pale copy of the European political and social systems, a heavy, inefficient foreign body and a source of violence.<sup>39</sup>

A threefold logic underlies the importing of the Western state model:

First, an interactive logic of *dependency* spurs imports.<sup>40</sup> By dependency, Badie means a system where the leaders of the South are dependent economically, but also technologically, and symbolically, on the interaction with “patron states”. Even states defining their identity by refusing the “West” (India, Libya), remain tributary to this West for their political system as well as their negative identity. Dependency is expressed in “sovereignty appropriations [*captations de souveraineté*].”<sup>41</sup> Diplomatic, socio-economic and institutional activities of client states are taken over by the patrons to a certain extent. However, the clearest expression of dependency is the lack of (institutional, ideological, technological, symbolic or economic) alternatives.

Second, the Western state is imported and maintained because of its *universalist pretensions*. In the Western intellectual tradition, the state is presented as the outcome of the spread of knowledge and reason. The warnings of classical thinkers, including Weber and Durkheim, that the state is rooted in a specific culture and might not be transferrable have been constantly forgotten and ignored. Instead, political development is equated with the adoption of this model. The “hegemony of Western modernity” further spreads with the “Westernization of the international scene” through (1) the “territorialization of the world” dividing it according to state borders.<sup>42</sup> (2) The imposition of principles developed in the West through international law (pp. 102 ff). International treaties have mushroomed and respect of these treaties is more often imposed on the weaker countries. (3) The Westernization of the international scene is linked to the “rules of the international game” (pp. 110 ff). Since the treaties of Westphalia, the state is expected to monopolize international violence. The international system rests on the “fiction of sovereignty”.

Lastly, the Western state is imported because a “*class of importers*”, a state elite (bureaucratic or intellectual) make it part of their strategies. These strategies are partially a matter of choice. Rulers have often adopted foreign techniques to strengthen themselves against external (Ottoman Empire, Turkish

<sup>39</sup> *Sociologie de l'Etat*, p. 163.

<sup>40</sup> *L'Etat Importé. Essai sur l'Occidentalisation de l'Ordre Politique*, p. 36.

<sup>41</sup> *Les Deux Etats. Pouvoir et Société en Occident et en terre d'Islam*, pp. 55 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *L'Etat Importé. Essai sur l'Occidentalisation de l'Ordre Politique*, pp. 82 ff. The following pages in parenthesis are referring to this book.



Republic) or internal threats (Meiji Japan). Likewise, revolutionary leaders use imported political practices and ideologies to distance themselves from the West (Indonesia's or Zimbabwe's use of socialism). However, imports are also involuntary. Policies pursued often have *unintended consequences*. The development of an army and the concomitant need for financial and technical aid involve compliance to conditions not initially in the minds of importers. The introduction of clocks in the Ottoman Empire, contested by an ulema considering that clocks threatened their authority, was for instance a by-product of the efforts to modernize the army technologically. Moreover, policies may have *composition effects*. The Atatürk's modernization policies implied measures that polarized the army against the religious establishment, initially allies, eventually led to the abolition of the caliphate (1926).

The logic that leads to adopting the state indicates the problems in managing the ensuing change. The dependency on the West, the difficulties in escaping the universalistic pretensions of the state, and the inclusion of imports in elite strategies, hinder the development of real alternatives. As the political centre increasingly relies on and lives in an imported political culture, it cuts itself off from the more traditional sections of society. A vicious circle similar to that observed in the Muslim world is formed. Governments pay off various groups and wind up in a neo-patrimonial logic which blocks democratic change. The prevalence of this vicious circle is most visibly expressed in the absence of civil societies based on a public/private division of spheres, an individualization of social relations, citizenship, horizontal solidarities, and the spread of associations (p. 116-8). The more or less authoritarian attempts to emulate a controllable civil society through corporatist strategies or personal "father of the nation" incitements invariably fail. Political protests, consequently, direct themselves against the political system as such rather than against specific policies or individuals. "Internal disorder" becomes a logical outcome of the failure to universalize the state. The problems of the Islamic state no longer appear isolated, related to a specific way of thinking about politics, but as the outcome of the more general difficulties of managing political change.

The difficulty of coming to terms with change influences the international as well as the internal order. Discontent is rarely contained in a national sphere. Movements of protest are typically rooted in solidarities rejecting the "national community" as the adequate space of political dissent. Religious and ethnic movements have no reason to stop at national borders. On the contrary, media has been a formidable promoter cross-border solidarities. The international "order" becomes directly affected as radical movements oppose the legitimacy



of the international order as such. Protests are directed against international borders (Iran-Iraq war) or crystallised around international objects (oil in the Aegean) or issues (Rushdie affair). There is a return to the point of departure. The international order may spread the state practice, but the difficulties it provokes in turn affect the international order.

Badie's imported state underlines that the fate of nations and, more importantly, the destiny of people within their boundaries, are inseparable from the international system. Globalization makes the original culture and the "happy savage" illusory. Globalization will probably not give a truce to countries who need to solve their political problems. Since the difficulties posed by the imported state cannot be considered or resolved on a purely national level, the international system is of immediate concern. Moreover, the international system is becoming increasingly affected by the legitimacy crises of states outside the West. Civil wars, disputes over state boundaries and increasingly militant rejection of the West appear as chief causes for international "disorders" at present.<sup>43</sup> It therefore becomes logical to pay closer attention to international developments and their effects.

### 3. Bertrand Badie and the Debates in International Relations

The opening lines in *Le Retournement du Monde* state that the international system is the most unstable of all political systems, and that the crisis of the nation state though not in itself sufficient to explain this instability, is a link connecting many issues.<sup>44</sup> From the outset the crisis of universalism at the level of the nation state is directly tied to the international level. Indeed, the *retournement* (reversal) of both the conventional world order and of the tools for analyzing it, is the conclusion of Badie's earlier work on the plurality of the state and on the non-transferability of concepts across cultural borders.

In this section we will first examine the reasons for which Badie and Smouts argue that the plurality of actors and of frames of reference make it impossible to stick with the conventional conceptions of national and international politics. Then we will place their arguments in the French tradition of studying IR.

<sup>43</sup> The growing interest taken in "civilizational clashes", as for instance in the recent works of Huntington (in Foreign Affairs) and of Galtung (just to mention two giants) seem to confirm this.

<sup>44</sup> *Le Retournement du Monde. Sociologie de la Scène Internationale*, p. 11. The following page numbers in parenthesis refer to this work.

Although the work of Badie suits the French habit of subsuming IR under other subjects, his studies tie up with more institutionalised French IR, and notably the work of Raymond Aron. However, Badie differs from Aron by rejecting a higher level theory for the international system. This brings us to the debates in general IR theory, where Badie sides with “critical” or “reflectivist” writers in the current (international) IR debate, where his work can be seen as a fresh contribution.

### **The reversal of International Relations**

The present international system is the reverse of what it is commonly presented to be. This is Badie’s and Marie-Claude Smouts central claim. The international system, can not be seen as resting on a triad organizing politics, space and motives: sovereignty, territoriality and security. It

is more diffuse in terms of power and more dispersed in terms of action, it emancipates individuals and groups but restricts sovereignty, liberates particularism and impedes institutionalization (p. 241).

To account for this new order, or increased disorder, the authors argue that it is necessary to step outside the conventional boundaries of IR theory and to draw on the “new horizons which the progress in sociology, in comparative politics and in the study of transnational flows offer” (p. 19). However, the work remain allusive on what these should bring. This may be explained by the limited ambitions of the book which is “less than a work of theory but more than a simple introduction, aiming to give a *fil conducteur* through the labyrinth of events and approaches” (p. 11) in IR. Three issues dominate the book: (1) the proliferation of international actors, (2) the impossibility to disregard the effects of an interaction of a plurality of rationalities, and (3) the ensuing need for a revision of traditional IR concepts based on a single rationality.

#### *1. A plurality of actors*

The claim that the state is no longer the only, or even the central, actor in IR remains controversial. However, the idea that states have little in common but the denomination, is likely to be even more contentious in a subject which has conventionally rested on the assumption that states are equal in principle.

Reversing the customary explanation of problems with sovereignty as caused by transnationalism, Badie and Smouts point to the uncertainty of the nature of



the state as one of the factors fuelling the development of *transnational flows*.<sup>45</sup> The legitimacy deficit of imported states fuels alternative, often infra-national and supra-national, solidarities and legitimacy forms, that by definition disregard the limits of the state. Further, the uncertainty of the nature of the state, augmented by the transformation of states (the end of empire), gives free reins to new nationalist and particularist claims (as in the former USSR). The increase in internationally articulated religious and ethnic claims can be seen in this perspective. In a more conventional vein, Badie and Smouts join the chorus of voices in IR and political science pointing to the effect of transnational flows on political order and the legitimacy of states. The identity of the state is directly affected by the large number of transnational flows. The central role of the state as provider of security, the sovereign, and upholder of order on its territory is constantly threatened as non-state actors take over part of these functions or contest the right of the state to keep them.

The plurality of non-state actors marks the "revenge of the real and concrete societies on a state order which after all remains rather abstract" (p. 70). New international actors emerge challenging the rather artificially constituted state. This "handicaps" the state's ability to act because it cannot master flows more stable and more perennial linked to "long conjunctures, to *des variables lourdes*."<sup>46</sup> The result is an *anomie* in state policies confronted with international protests (non-governmental organizations) and violence (terrorism) that the state has no means to control. Conventional diplomatic techniques prove ineffective as the conflictual relations transcend the inter-state realm (p. 110).

## 2. A plurality of rationalities (p. 24)

The plurality of actors leads to a plurality of rationalities interacting in the international system. Each new actor, emerging on the international scene, has a political culture of its own, and its own perception of the identity of self and other, of past and present. To the extent that this perception motivates (international) action, it excludes the possibility that a universal system or

<sup>45</sup> by which the authors mean all relations beyond the frame of the state escaping at least partially the control of the state, i.e. including the actions of religious institutions, the development of international media and culture, and economic flows (see chapter 2).

<sup>46</sup> This is a concept in French IR attached mainly to the work of Pierre Renouvin and J.B. Duroselle. These are underlying the *forces profondes* which Smouts defines as "basic evolutionary forces at the root of understanding world development". SMOUTS, Marie-Claude (1987) "The Study of International Relations in France" *Millennium*, 16:2 p. 286.

theory could account for the international system.

This is not only significant for the *many new areas* of transnational interaction, as has been implied by many students of IR, Badie and Smouts argue that it also fundamentally alters the outlook on *traditional issues* in IR. For instance, accepting of the idea that states are not the same and that they follow differently defined rationalities, means that strategic thinking has to be revised. The effects of plural rationalities is strongest outside the conventional diplomatic sphere. Conflicts escape the control of the state. They take place between states with different political cultures, but also between entities which do not share in or explicitly refuse state. Armed conflict often involves movements that either contest the state (civil wars) or simply ignore it (organized crime). Diplomacy loses its effectiveness as it has to deal with movements outside the beaten path, that follow different rules or explicitly reject the diplomatic rules. "Already largely utopian in the old inter-state system, the regulation of war and the pacific settlement of conflicts has disappeared with the privatization of violence" (p. 184).

Badie and Smouts recognize that there is a conventional sphere of interstate action managed by diplomats sharing a diplomatic culture. *A la* James Rosenau they therefore separate the sphere of state craft from a sphere of transnational relations. While the state sphere is stable and functions according to an international diplomatic culture, non-state relations are unstable and follow no predetermined, or rather a myriad of, logic(s) and culture(s). "Thus, the sociology of IR is constantly confronted with a duality of codes: for the necessities of international exchanges, a universal code apparently constructed around the notion of sovereignty; for the deep forces [*forces profondes*], a multiplicity of repertoires, of which it is impossible to know which one will be used" (p. 145-6).

In these conditions it is difficult to establish norms and rules for most international action. There can be no question of a rule arrived at by consensus of all the international actors. This does not exclude that rules and norms govern behaviour in certain spheres of international life. However, these cannot in any sense be conceived as permanent consensus or rationality based. International rules and norms are reinterpreted and contested at all times. There is a constant disregard of the "rules of the game" by those who deny their validity.

### 3. "The revenge of the actor on the system" (p. 240)

The methodological consequence that the Badie and Smouts draw from the



increased complexity of the relations is that the actor has to be granted a more central place in the analysis. It is necessary to find a way of accounting for the multiple rationalities, for the multiplicity of identities, cultures, and motives interacting internationally. To ignore them would be disastrous both for the attempt to gain an understanding of international phenomena and of course for any practical translation of this into political practice. "In general, by reducing the other to the self, the actor loses all rationality, yet believes herself to be acting in the name of a universal rationality" (p. 28). However, integrating the multiplicity of rationalities present in the second "code" of the "forces profondes", is more easily said than done. The authors hint at the need to revise the central concepts of IR, viz. Badie's exhortations to abandon universalizing approaches and introduce historically and culturally sensitive studies. They argue that IR has been particularly resistant to change:

Since it cannot function on all these levels, the theory of IR has a tendency to privilege that of universality, *campant en fait sur les terrains balisés par l'histoire et la philosophie européennes* from which it draws its main arguments. The academic divide between internationalists and specialists of 'exotic' political systems reinforce this withdrawal [of IR] by impeding the necessary *fécondation mutuelle* (p. 146).

Badie and Smouts join other IR scholars in deploring the insufficiency of the instruments at the disposal of the analyst for studying an increasingly complex reality. The concept of power for instance, is increasingly elusive and appears to vary with the perception one has of it (p. 146). Moreover, conventional systemic analysis appears unable to define the system, its functioning and the rules of change (p. 156).

However, and perhaps this is what could be expected, Badie and Smouts propose no alternative theory of IR. If any actor has multiple identities with reference to different, not necessarily compatible, and dynamic cultural contexts and if the choice of how to define the self, at any particular moment in time, is the outcome of a complex strategy, there can be no general theory. "The extreme diversity of internal political orders makes the identification and the number of the actors of the international system very uncertain; *it also makes it impossible to reduce to any single paradigm the articulation between the internal and the external order*" (p. 29 *my italics*<sup>47</sup>). Badie also argues that, for understanding change in IR, the concept of structure is only an obstacle.

<sup>47</sup> For this point see also "Flux Migratoires et Relations Transnationales."

There is no such thing as an international structure. A structure can be nothing more than a the culturally embedded network of the actors.<sup>48</sup> Instead, the authors suggest accounting for diversity by taking the actor as point of departure.

The 'self' and the 'other' is no longer a philosophical question or a problem of foreign relations taken on by the state. Foreign policy is made daily and implies each individual"(p. 243).

### Français malgré lui ?

How does this way of treating IR relate to a would-be French tradition? It is difficult to say if such a traditions exists in the first place, as most debates take place cross-nationally, if not transnationally. Unlike the Brits, who claim to have "the only fully fledged non-American tradition of IR scholarship"<sup>49</sup>, IR in France is mostly denied a strong place. This makes it easy to underestimate the scope if IR studies in France. "IR" is scarcely used.<sup>50</sup> Smouts remarks that French IR has been slow to develop because of the tendency to subsume IR studies under other subjects. Yet, a rich literature pertinent to IR exists in France.<sup>51</sup> Badie's work can be linked both to the tendency of the French to subsume IR under other subjects and to the institutionalised French IR tradition.

On the one hand, Badie clearly considers IR as part of political science. He has approached the subject by way of political science and continues to refer mainly to debates in political science, rather than to debates in IR. This leads to some stunning omissions of IR literature. The relative absence of the "British school" of IR is one, which is all the more striking as the themes of the spread of the system of states and the effects of cultural plurality and multiple loyalties

<sup>48</sup> Interview, 30 June 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Neumann's paper presented on this panel.

<sup>50</sup> There are however, well institutionalized schools for historic and strategic studies. For the strategic studies in France, see journals such as *Défense Nationale* or *Mélanges Stratégiques* and in the publications of the IFRI (*Institut Français de Relations Internationales*) and the CERI (*Centre d'Etudes des Relations Internationales*). For the historic school one school is that created by R. Aron which will be discussed below and another one related to the works of Pierre Renouvin and Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Introduction à l'Histoire des Relations Internationale* (Paris: A. Colin, 1964). Jean-Baptiste Duroselle, *Histoire Diplomatique de 1919 à Nos Jours* (Paris: Dalloz, 1978).

<sup>51</sup> Smouts, op. cit. This ambiguous wording is the only possible explanation for the British claim to have the only school of IR outside the US. For other national traditions see the overview in *Millennium*, vol. 16, no. 2 (1987).



on the international system are central to this tradition. Moreover, the British school of IR tackles the themes from an angle which Badie should find it easy to sympathise with.<sup>52</sup> There are other omissions due rather to the French academic climate. Feminism and gender studies, for instance, is not even considered worthy of a mention in the sociology of IR despite the focus on identities constituted outside the framework of the nation state and on cross national solidarities and movements.<sup>53</sup> Likewise, the “post-structuralists” are dismissed with one sentence: “This picture is not a “deconstruction” of the world by authors caught in a fashionable post-structuralism” (p. 237). A disconcerting dismissal, for Badie and Smouts share many insights, premises, and conclusions of the brushed-aside post-structuralists.

On the other hand, Badie has clear links to part of the institutionalised academic IR tradition in France. The “sociological approach”, as defined by Marcel Merle, or the sociological part of the four level conceptualization of IR proposed by Raymond Aron (theory, sociology, history and praxology), lie close to Badie’s work, not only in terms of the titles of the books.<sup>54</sup>

These studies share the characteristic of being the work of “outsiders”. Aron immigrated to IR from sociology and Merle, a lawyer, from (mainly) Anglo-American systemic thinking. Badie is also a foreigner in the French IR community (in addition to being half Iranian by nationality). Much of his work has mixed and imported debates and literature, although as Badie would point out, imports always entail changes and adaptations. The works on “culture and politics” and on “cultural development” are overviews of classical “international” literature on the subject. Likewise, the concern with the Islamic state and the studies of the different rationalities that underlie the development of the state in the West and in the “land of Islam”, have led Badie to use “Orientalist literature” regarding Islamic political thought which has rarely been applied to the discussion around state-building. Badie has worked as a developer of debates and introducer of ideas, rather than as a carrier of a national tradition.

A considerable distance, nonetheless, separates Badie’s work from that of

<sup>52</sup> The work of Hedley Bull is referred to, but the work of authors such as Andrew Linklater, Martin Wight or James Mayall are unfortunately not discussed.

<sup>53</sup> Such neglect is improbable in the Anglo-Saxon academic community where gender studies have come to occupy a central place. See the overview by V. Spike Peterson and Anne Sisson Runyan (eds), *Global Gender Issues* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993). Or the special issue in *Millennium* vol. 17 n. 3 (1988).

<sup>54</sup> See Marcel Merle, *Sociologie des Relations Internationales* (Paris: Dalloz, 1982); Raymond Aron, *Paix et Guerre entre les Nations*, 8th ed. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961/84).

other French IR scholars. Merle develops a strictly systemic approach, explicitly declining provide to an account of the international system or to answer immediate questions. Rather Merle's aim is to analyse of "the substance of IR"<sup>55</sup>, a substance Badie would not doubt deny the existence of.

The relation to Aron's work is more complicated. On the one hand, much of the criticism advanced by Badie and Smouts with regard to the traditions of IR can be found also in Aron's work. Aron would have no difficulty in recognizing the importance of non-state actors and transnational phenomena, which he treats extensively. "Never until present has a civilization been in contact with so many other civilizations; never has a civilization conquered so many lands, unsettled so many customs or transferred so much knowledge and power to men that were defeated, subjugated and exploited by it."<sup>56</sup> Nor would it be difficult for Aron to recognize the themes of the multitude of states or the diversity of the meaning of the state. Indeed, he explicitly considers the state as a specific construction of Western European history, which, when transposed differs in both form and substance, though juridically remaining the same. Aron also discusses the particular problems of the Muslim states with regard to a secular political order. Finally, Aron would agree that IR is part and parcel of an extended political science family.

A total science or philosophy of politics would include international relations as one of its chapters, but this chapter would keep its originality because it would *treat the relations between political units each of which claims the right of implementing its own justice [se faire justice elle-même] and of being the sole master of the decision to fight or not to fight.*<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, Badie and Smouts fundamentally differ from Aron on the question of rationality. For Aron, the objective of the sociologist is to formulate general propositions, either in terms of the determinants of the elements constitutive of the international order, or in terms of their regularities in the succession of international orders.<sup>58</sup> The sociologist's function is to contextualize an element of the theory. This presupposes that theory is not itself a matter of contextuality and history, as Badie would argue that it is. The heterogeneity of the system is assumed not to affect its fundamental functioning.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 325.

<sup>57</sup> Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations*, p. 20. Original emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, 184. That Aron is referring to the idea of a universal logic is clear in the statement that the theory can be used as a "criteria of rationality" for comparing policies.



Thus, Aron can observe civilizational clashes (p. 325); differences in the meaning of states (p. 375-7) and argue that the neutrality of the state is inconceivable for many people (p. 375), or that development and institutions are not transferrable (p. 378), without considering that this influences the “theoretical level”.

Badie and Smouts draw the opposite conclusion. They argue that the multiplicity of meaning changes the fundamental categories of IR and thus alters the logic of the system as such. Since the concepts of sovereignty or state—at the heart of IR—are not of universal validity, it is impossible to carry out an analysis of IR based on these concepts. In brief, no “specificity of the international system” exists to make it possible to proceed at Aron’s higher level (or at least any such specificity has yet to be identified). The role of the “sociology of IR” then becomes to make conceptual sense of individual development trajectories while simultaneously redefining concepts in relation to these same trajectories, rather than to find generalities or to contextualize a universally applicable logic.

### **In the camp of the challengers**

At this point Badie enters the current debate in IR. By asking how an international system operates, in which actors follow different rationalities, have different perceptions of the world and of their own actions and the actions of others, Badie finds himself in the camp of writers questioning the mainstream.

In fact, there seems to be an ongoing, or never ending, crisis in the discipline of IR and more precisely in the part of it usually dubbed realism.<sup>59</sup> Though this school is certainly less stuck in the “intellectual backwater of the main currents of Western social theory”<sup>60</sup> than some of its critics maintain, it is undeniable that there is an increasing plurality of perspectives and that many of the foundations of the “theory” are open to debate. The “challenges to the

<sup>59</sup> For an overview of this never ending debate, see Stefano Guzzini, *The Continuing Story of Death Foretold. Realism in International Relations / International Political Economy* (Florence: European University Institute, 1992, SPS Working Papers no. 92/20), chapter 16.

<sup>60</sup> Jim George and David Campbell, “Patterns of Dissent and the Celebration of Difference: Critical Social Theory and International Relations,” *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1990), p. 272. After all major “Western” social theorists (James S. Coleman for instance) continue to operate with and refine individualist methodologies without integrating or accepting the post-structuralist, critical, or linguistic theories advocated by these critics.

discipline" are founded on the alleged incapacity of realism to deal with the study of "the international", either in terms of raising relevant empirical questions or in terms of its theoretical baggage. One off-spring of the debate has been the development of international political economy. To cover the entire debate is both impossible and unnecessary for the present purposes. Suffice it to say that Badie's work joins in the part of the debate which is concerned with questioning the adequacy of the theoretical ground of the discipline.

Mainstream IR has come under attack for its failure to question its own perception of the world. Authors of various intellectual traditions have questioned developments within the IR tradition and their arguments have piled up in front of a main-stream which seems both unwilling and unable to take a stand on them. Who and what are excluded from IR debates and why? What are the implications of these exclusions (Ashley)? What are the foundations of the discipline and what do they imply? what are the implications of a "God's-eye view on the world" (Walker)?

By accepting the idea of plurality of states, by challenging the notion of sovereignty and the adequacy of a universal logic to explain the international system and by denying it the specificity that realists would accord it, Badie finds himself in the camp of some of these critics. They are sometimes lumped together with Marxist, Gramscian, and Frankfurt school critics, under the heading of reflectivists. They themselves prefer the more noble denomination "dissidents" and see themselves as speaking from "exile" (*International Studies Quarterly*—exile?!).<sup>61</sup> Like these self-proclaimed marginals, Badie is questioning the founding myths of theories, the binary construction of identities, the reification of specific categories and concepts such as sovereignty, and the taken a priori nature of the categories for apprehending policies and events.<sup>62</sup> As is rather natural the categories and concepts questioned are precisely the same: the concepts of state, sovereignty, individual, and community. The outcome is also equivalent: through denial of the special status of the international as well as of an assumed universal logic Badie's position is close to Walker's. Walker prefers the notion of "World Politics" to IR, as "politics" indicates that the problems

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of the debates, see Robert O. Keohane's defense of mainstream IR, *International Institutions and State Power. Essays in International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), particularly the essay entitled "International Institutions. Two Approaches." For the critique see, "Special Issue: Speaking the Language of Exile. Dissidence in International Studies," *International Studies Quarterly* vol. 34, no. 3 (1990).

<sup>62</sup> See notably "Communauté, Individualisme, et Culture; and Formes et Transformations des Communautés Politiques."



of the rest of political science are shared also by the IR community.

At the core of the methodology proposed by these “dissidents”, among whom we now include Badie, is the call for the introduction of history and space, i.e. historical and social context. The important point, though, is not the idea of space and time as such, but rather the way in which they are to be integrated in the analysis. Keohane’s response to this call provides a clear example of how main-stream I.R. and dissidents talk at cross purposes.<sup>63</sup> Keohane sees no need for abandoning the “rationalist” approach to introduce time and space into the discussion. He retains only the need to contextualise both concepts and institutions from the critique and considers an individualistic, rational choice perspective well equipped to do this:<sup>64</sup> “In quite a short time research stimulated by rationalistic theory has proposed new hypotheses about why governments create and join international regimes, and the conditions under which these institutions wax or wane”.<sup>65</sup> In other words, a “rationalist approach” can account for time and space alike.

Like Aron, Keohane infers nothing from the critique to shake the foundations of the “rationalist approach”. While accepting the fact that there are different rules and norms at work and that these have to be set in their historical context to be apprehended, he denies the concomitant claim that this alters the functioning of the theory. Yet, this is precisely the point of R. Walker’s critique of Keohane:

The epistemological claim to a universally applicable scientific method thus coexists quite uneasily with the contrary claim, articulated in ontological, ethical, and ideological forms that human life is fragmented...<sup>66</sup>

To pose the issue in terms of a position in relation to rationality might not be false, but is certainly not the way that the would-be-dissidents (or Badie for that matter) would like to see their position. They tend to avoid the seemingly endless debates to which there might be no answer. Consequently, the issue of relativism often remains obscured or neglected. Instead, the authors in this tradition point to their contribution in terms of taking problems seriously and not shying away because there are no clear and easy answers.

<sup>63</sup> See Robert Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power*, pp. 170 ff.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 171 ff.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>66</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “History and Structure in the Theory of International Relations,” *Millennium*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1991), p. 166.

The key issues raised by most recent forms of critical theory, whatever their differences, is not some primordial divide between the modern and the post-modern—and thus between the objectivist and the relativist, the responsible and the irresponsible—but the erasure of critical scholarship in the name of an epistemologically legitimated social science that continues to treat ontological difficulties much as King Canute treated the incoming tide.<sup>67</sup>

## Conclusion

Now, if all this is already there, why bring in Badie? The answer lies partly in his contribution of new elements to the debate, notably regarding the conception and practise of politics in the non-Western and particularly Arab world. Badie examines the central concepts of the discipline in the light of his material and shows the plural meanings of notions such as community, individual, state. More importantly, Badie poses with particular clarity the problem—raised by a large number of dissidents—of the implications of the multitude of worlds. In a concrete way, at times absent from the more philosophical “discourses” and “texts” of other critics of mainstream IR, Badie confronts the issues of the left out, the culturally and socially determined. Walker questions the founding myths, the binary categories developed to understand the world by tracing the historical evolution of specific concepts through their philosophical treatment. A rereading of Machiavelli becomes one way of contesting the claims to universality of realism and its attachment to a “fixed point”.<sup>68</sup> Badie would arrive at a similar conclusion, but through the use of a comparative method allowing him to demonstrate the evolving meanings of one concept in different traditions and thereby to abolish the foundation of the universalizing claims attached to it. Both are ways of introducing time and space into the analysis “seriously” enough to allow them real importance.

Badie does what many critics of the orthodox IR call for. He focuses on the overlooked in concrete terms, acknowledges “other worlds” and attempts to spell them out. He gives solid evidence for various perceptions of the world and

<sup>67</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “Gender and Critique in the Theory of International Relations,” in V. Spike Peterson (ed.), *Gendered States. Feminist (Re)Visions of International Relations Theory* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), p. 199.

<sup>68</sup> R.B.J. Walker, “The Prince and the Pauper: Traditions, Modernity, and Practice in the Theory of International Relations,” in James Der Derian and Michael J. Shapiro (eds), *International/Intertextual Relations. Postmodern Readings of World Politics* (Lexington, D.C. Heath: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 41.



the effects of these on the system as such. This applied way of raising theoretical issues may enhance the debate between applied and theoretical scholars. Badie's theoretical contributions should be welcomed by those who want applied research programmes, object to an excessively abstract debate and who are impatient to get on with the job.

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